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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Monday, August 26, 1940.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "EVERGREENS FOR THE HOME GROUNDS." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, United States Department of Agriculture.

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One of the questions that comes up often in letters to the U. S. Department of Agriculture is how to plant evergreens. Many people report that they have tried to have evergreen trees or shrubs growing on their home grounds but have no luck with them. The young trees died after transplanting.

Evergreens are favorites for farmsteads not only because they add beauty but because they also are useful in protecting the house against winter winds. A good windbreak of evergreen trees with low spreading branches will help cut the cost of heating the house in winter. Of course, you don't want evergreens so close to your house they cut off air, light, and sun. Plant them at least 75 or 100 feet from the house where they can shelter without shading.

Evergreens thrive especially in the moist climate of the East and the Pacific Northwest. In the North the evergreen trees bearing cones, like pine and spruce, thrive. In the South the broadleaf evergreens such as magnolias and rhododendrons do best. Few of the cone-bearing evergreens grow well in the warm climate around the Gulf of Mexico, and fewer still in central Florida. On the other hand, almost no broadleaf evergreens endure the cold winters of the most northern States. In the regions farther west, which are drier and also have considerable freezing weather, just a few varieties of cone-bearing evergreens thrive.

So before you plant, select your evergreens with care. Be sure to choose varieties that will do well in your locality and climate.

Then be sure you set them out at the right time of year. You can plant

evergreens with success in either spring or fall, but choose the right time of spring and fall. A few weeks from now when the fall rains begin will be an ideal time to put in young evergreens. Or you can wait until next spring when the leaves just begin to come out on the other trees. The trick is to plant evergreens just at the end of one of their semi-annual "rest periods" -- just before their season of active root-growth begins.

The time to plant and the way to plant depend on this one important fact: that evergreens are moisture-loving plants. They need a constant supply of moisture because they are always covered with foliage which loses moisture by evaporation. If the roots can't supply constant moisture to the needles or leaves, the evergreen dries and dies. So plant evergreens after the dry season when the rains begin. And plant in such a way that the roots have an easy time getting established and bringing up water.

The need for constant moisture is the reason you take up a generous lot of soil with the roots, and then press the soil into a ball around the roots which keeps them from drying. Be careful not to let this ball of earth crack or get loose from the roots for that will dry them. Another thing -- don't let the young evergreens lie around until you have time to plant them. If you aren't ready to plant, bury the balls and water them regularly until you set them out.

Plant evergreens about as deep in the ground as they were before transplanting. Dig a hole deep and wide enough so you can put a layer of good topsoil under and around the roots. Have the soil moist but not so wet it will bake hard when it dries. Set the tree in, pack the soil firmly around the roots, and then water it well. To be sure the roots get plenty of water slope the soil so it cups in toward the plant. This will trap the water and allow it to soak in the ground around the roots.

Set evergreens a good distance apart. Trees planted too close so they crowd

each other as they grow will soon have dead branches on the crowded side.

You may need to water your young evergreens until they "get on their feet." Water them once a week, soaking the ground well, when rainfall is lacking. But don't water so much you keep the soil soggy. Spraying the tops once a day is helpful to keep the needles or leaves from drying out until the roots get established.

Wind is often hard on transplanted evergreens. To keep wind from drying out the newly planted trees or shrubs, put up a screen of burlap to the windward. In the dry country of the central and western States evergreens often need a permanent windscreen to live at all. In this part of the country plant evergreens where buildings or other trees will protect them from drying winds.

By the way, newly planted evergreens are not the only ones that benefit from a long deep drink of water at about this season. Beginning in early fall all evergreens will benefit from a good soaking in dry weather. Give the roots enough to drink to prepare them for winter. Many evergreens that turn brown and die out in the winter -- or are "winter-killed", as the saying goes -- actually die of thirst. The ground underneath becomes frozen before they have had a chance to fill up on moisture. Then winter sunshine and wind together burn their foliage.

Evergreens need an acid soil and plenty of mulch to protect their roots. In their natural state in the forest they supply their own acid and mulch by dropping needles and leaves. So remember -- never rake up the pine needles under your trees, or cultivate the growth underneath them. You can help by adding an extra mulch of oak leaves, straw, or strawy manure.

The U. S. Department of Agriculture has a bulletin giving many points on caring for evergreens. If you want further information, write for this free publication. Send a postcard to the U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for Farmers' Bulletin 1826, called "Care of Ornamental Trees and Shrubs."

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